

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 17, 2012

General James N. Mattis, U.S. Marine Corps
Commander, U.S. Central Command
7115 South Boundary Boulevard
MacDill AFB, FL 33621-5101

Major General Kevin A. Leonard, U.S. Army
Commanding Officer, Surface Deployment and Distribution Command
1 Soldier Way
Scott AFB, IL 62225

Dear General Mattis and Major General Leonard:

Our purpose in writing is to request your consideration of a proposal that we believe has the potential to allow the U.S. military to retrograde the estimated 887,000 to 1.7 million pieces of cargo from Afghanistan to the United States by December 2014 in a more effective and expeditious manner. In order to help alleviate the logistical bottleneck that is now occurring with existing procedures for screening and wash downs in Pakistan and to prevent any worsening in the future, we would like to make you aware of an opportunity to use world-class facilities at the Port of Virginia for this purpose.

Currently, as you know, cargo is prescreened by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS) at a consolidated location in Afghanistan before it is sent to the Port of Karachi, Pakistan for a secondary wash by subcontracted Pakistani nationals. We understand that proper U.S. government oversight may be lacking at this site, and the procedures are causing a logistical bottleneck in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as increasing the cost of redeployment and retrograde. As the drawdown increases its pace, we believe this bottleneck will only become more severe.

Officials with the Customs and Border Protection-Agriculture Inspection Service (CBP-AIS) and APHIS have indicated that Karachi is fraught with problems, with an estimated 10 percent fail rate. In fact, some military cargo is reportedly stored unprotected outside of the port's gates. As the cargo volume increases twenty-fold during the upcoming three years, the costs associated with operations at Karachi are vulnerable to significant fee increases, thereby increasing overall drawdown costs and slowing our military's exit.

The Port of Virginia and its industry partners are prepared to offer a viable alternative which would lower costs, allow for a more efficient drawdown, and provide job opportunities for hundreds of military veterans with the necessary training and expertise. A secondary wash down site at a quarantined terminal at the Port of Virginia in Portsmouth will free up capacity in

Karachi, increase inspection quality, and maintain price controls by placing the cargo in the control of U.S. citizens instead of Pakistani nationals.

As one of our nation's recognized strategic ports, the Port of Virginia's deep shipping channels offer the multimodal capacity necessary to serve the in-flow of this military cargo. The port also has the ability to expedite the forward processing and shipment of vehicles, cargo, and materials to military units located within the United States.

CBP-AIS, APHIS, and Commonwealth of Virginia government officials toured the Portsmouth Terminal December 15, 2011, and our understanding is that they indicated that the proposed plan could be feasible.

We would appreciate your appropriate consideration of this proposal, consistent with all applicable laws and regulations.

Sincerely,



Senator Jim Webb



Senator Mark Warner



Representative Scott Rigell



Representative Randy Forbes